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SIPDIS

AMCONSUL KRAKOW SENDS
STATE FOR EUR/CE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PL](#)

SUBJECT: DISAFFECTED CIVIC PLATFORM LEADERS SPEAK OUT

Classified By: Krakow Consul General Anne Hall for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Poland's ruling political party Civic Platform (PO) has lost the drive for change that brought it to power and has become increasingly focused on political goals (namely, capturing the Presidency for Tusk), at least according to two Krakow-based PO EU Parliamentarians who found themselves in the cold when PO's European Parliamentary election list was announced. These same politicians predict an overall PO win in the Brussels race -- but at a lower-than-expected margin -- and a changed party by the 2010 presidential and self-government elections. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Krakow Pol-EconOff and Pol-Econ Specialist met April 8 and 9 with PO Malopolska Deputy Party Chair and MEP Urszula Gacek and PO MEP Boguslaw Sonik. Gacek decided not to run after being offered a relatively low position on PO's Krakow list and Sonik is starting from a number three position despite high expectations of leading the list and rumors of threats to join the rival Law and Justice Party (PiS).

Parachute Candidates and Party Politics -----

¶3. (C) Both Gacek and Sonik expressed dismay at PM Tusk's decision to insert big-name "parachute" candidates as list leaders for the June 7 European Parliamentary elections instead of honoring local party selection procedures, citing as prime examples Roza Thun in Krakow and Marian Krzaklewski in Podkarpackie as well as Danuta Hubner in Warsaw and Lena Kolarska-Bobinska in Lublin. While it is generally accepted that PO needs a "locomotive" to beat PiS's highly popular candidate former Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro in Krakow, Sonik commented that Thun is instead a car that needs to be pulled. (Comment: While Thun is well-known within Krakow elite social circles, she is seen as a Warsaw candidate who lacks popular support. However, she does contribute to the wide net PO is seeking to cast to attract voters on both the left and the right. End Comment).

¶4. (C) Gacek opined that both PO and PiS are treating the EU Parliamentary elections as a mega opinion poll prior to the 2010 Presidential election. Gacek and Sonik agreed that there is no room for dissent at the regional level and that substantive initiatives are on the sidelines as money is spent on preparing for the national campaign. Asked why local Podkarpackie party members initially harshly critical of Tusk's selection of the right-wing values-oriented former Solidarity leader Marian Krzaklewski appear now to have acquiesced, Sonik said that the local party apparatus simply has no choice these days but to go along or be left in the cold. (Comment: Opposition to Krzaklewski's autocratic control of Solidarity under the Buzek government in the late 1990s is, ironically, what contributed to PO's formation. This same approach is what some lower-ranking PO members now resent in Tusk's management of PO. End Comment.)

Predictions: PO Win, but Barely and at What Cost?

15. (C) While PO currently leads PiS in national opinion polls by approximately 50 to 25 percent, Gacek and Sonik noted that the margin between PO and PiS will be smaller than polls suggest, especially when taking into account the predicted low turnout (21 percent in 2004) as well as the more disciplined and Euroskeptic PiS electorate. Polish seats in the European Parliament will already be reduced from 54 to 50, resulting in the loss of at least one seat for the Malopolska-Swietokrzyskie region Sonik is running from. Neither Gacek nor Sonik judge that parties outside the four main parties (PO, PiS, Democratic Left Alliance, and Polish People's Party) will meet with success. Both, though, believe former PO politician Pawel Piskorski's Democratic Party (SD) is worth keeping an eye on as more and more voters are looking for a center-based alternative to a PO party that is moving to the right on social issues. Piskorski himself is energized by his personal crusade against Tusk.

Comment

16. (C) While both Gacek and Sonik have much to be bitter about, their characterization of PO as a party that has lost the momentum for change which inspired voters in 2007 has been echoed by politicians and businessmen from Silesia to Podkarpackie in recent months. Frustrated politicians and business leaders have told ConGen that PO has failed to implement the bold initiatives it promised. While interlocutors tend to laud PO for improving the tone of

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political discourse, they lament that more has not been done to improve Poland's infrastructure and health care system, etc. Interestingly, some PO members accuse PO of fulfilling PiS's characterization of the party as having subordinated commitment to reform to achieving short-term political goals.

Indications are that PM Tusk's presidential ambitions have driven his thinking in forming the PO EU Parliament list. His willingness to sacrifice stalwart party members -- and key 2007 campaign promises -- to his political quest could produce a very different party ahead of the 2010 national elections.

HALL
QUANRUD